Why Study Spanish?
This module reflects on the following very important question: Why Study Spanish?

Why learn Spanish?

Elena on August 23, 2009 — 1 Comment



First of all, Spanish is:

- the world's third most spoken language, after Mandarin Chinese and English, and ranks second in terms of native speakers
- spoken on all continents, most extensively in North and South America, Europe, and certain parts of Africa, Asia and Oceania
- the second most used language in international communication, and an official language of the UN and its organizations
- is the mother tongue of approximately 350 million people in 21 countries, and is widely spoken in another 21 countries where it is not an official language
- one of the most popular languages to study.

More and more people study Spanish everyday all over the world, because they want:

1. to communicate with native speakers of Spanish
2. travel with ease to Spanish-speaking countries
3. understand Spanish culture better: read Spanish books in the original, listen to Spanish songs and watch movies in Spanish

4. get education in Spanish-speaking countries
5. develop their business/ be promoted/get a job.

As for me, I want to learn Spanish, because I consider it one of the most beautiful languages in the world. I really like Spanish culture – Art (architecture and artists), Dance (not only flamenco but latin american as well), actors (Penelope Cruz), singers (Ricky Martin, Natalia Oreiro, Shakira, Jennifer Lopez, Mark Antony). I do want to understand Spanish songs in the original and watch films. I'm dreaming about travelling to Spain, but I want to learn some basic phrases first.

What about you? Why do you study Spanish?

El Alfabeto Español
This module teaches the pronunciation of the Spanish Alphabet.

The Spanish Alphabet

letter	pronunciation	example	meaning
A a	a	arriba	up
B b	be	barca	boat
C c	ce	carretera	road/highway
D d	de	ducha	shower/bath
E e	e	empanada	a savory filled pastry
F f	efe	falda	skirt
G g	ge	gata	cat
H h	hache	hermana	sister
I i	i	isla	island
J j	jota	jamón	ham
K k*	ka	kilómetro	kilometer
L l	ele	lejos	far
M m	eme	mano	hand

N n	ene	nariz	nose
Ñ ñ	eñe	niña	girl
O o	o	ojo	eye
P p	pe	pan	bread
Q q	cu	qué	who
R r	ere	rey	king
S s	ese	sobre	over
T t	te	tienda	store
U u	u	unidad	unity
V v	ve	vaca	cow
W w*	uve doble	(only foreign words, pronunciation varies)	
		watt	(pronounced like bat)
		kiwi	(pronounced like quihui)
X x	equis	xilófono	xylophone
Y y	i griega	ya	already
Z z	zeta	zapata	shoe
Spanish has three digraphs. At one point they were considered separate letters, but no longer are, and are now alphabetized normally.			

Ch ch		chicle	chewing gum
Ll ll		llave	key
Rr rr		perro	dog
*Although K and W are officially in the Spanish alphabet, there are few words that use the letters, and they are primarily of foreign origin.			

Reglas del Alfabeto
This module teaches the 10 rules which must be applied to the Spanish Alphabet.

The Spanish Alphabet and Stress Rules:

Fortunately the sounds of Spanish letters are very similar to sounds of English letters. It is important to study and memorize the differences between what sound you would expect to hear and say in English and what sound you need to say and hear in Spanish.

Below are noted the differences we find in the Spanish alphabet, if there is nothing noted, then the sound is the same in our language and Spanish.

A sounds like ah

B

C has two sounds: soft = s (cereal), hard (cat) = k

CH

D

E sounds like ay or eh

F

G has two sounds: soft = h (hot), hard (gate) = g *note that the soft sound is different

from the English j sound (Georgia)

we use for soft g

H is silent. Just skip over it in a word.

I sounds like ee (bee)

J sounds like an h all the time (hot)

K is not a letter used in standard Spanish words, but sounds the same

L

LL sounds like a consonant y (yellow)

M

N

Ñ sounds like the combination ny (Califor*nia*)

O

P

Q sounds like a k (kick) *note this is different from the kw sound we use in English (quick)

and the vowel u does follow the q in Spanish but is not spoken

U sounds like oo (room)

V sounds like b

W is not a letter used in standard Spanish words, but sounds the same

X *sometimes has a h sound (Mexico)

Y has the same consonant sound (yellow), and the vowel sound ee (beet)

Z sounds like s

We can predict that the letters c and g will use their soft sound when followed by the vowels

e or i.

hard soft hard soft

ga ca

(gue) ge (que) ce

(gui) gi (qui) ci

go co

gu cu

Whenever you hear the hard sound of g or c in front of e or i, the spelling will have to change.

gue que

gui qui

When you the gu spelling with a dieresis (ü) in front of e or i, the u will speak. When c is followed

by u and another vowel, you will hear the sound that q makes in English (kw as in quick).

güe (gway) cua (kwa)

güi (gwee) cue (kway)

cui (kwee)

cuo (kwoh)

Knowing the sounds of the letters is only half the battle when pronouncing Spanish words.

We need to know the stress rules also. Then we can say the right sounds and emphasize

the right syllable in the word. There are three simple rules for stress in the Spanish language:

1. If a word ends in a vowel, n or s it will be stressed on the next to the last syllable.

man**za**na tra**ba**jan a**lum**nos

2. If a word ends in a consonant other than n or s it will be stressed on the last syllable.

escrib**ir**liber**tad**tropi**cal**

3. If the pronunciation of the word does not follow normal stress rules 1 and 2 there will

be a written accent in the word to show how to pronounce it correctly. The examples

below are highlighted where the stress should be, but the accent shows where the

stress actually is.

ejér**ci**to á**gui**la crepús**cu**lo

Armed with the sounds of the letters and your stress rules, you can hear how to spell a word

in Spanish and you can automatically tell if an accent is on the word. When the word is not

stressed as it is supposed to be, it has an accent.